

Mr. WYDEN. The Senator is right with respect to how critical this question is. As he knows, because he and I have made this a top priority now for quite some time, we didn't get a fair shake in the last session of Congress. I put a hold on several appointments from the Bush administration because I wanted to make sure that they got the wake-up call. I lifted that hold and, frankly, I wish I hadn't because I think they have never put the effort into trying to get this warranted program reauthorized. So Senator SMITH is correct in terms of saying that this program should have been reauthorized some time ago. He and I have put it at the top of our priority list.

This is not an abstract question. Decisions are being made by rural school officials, by county commissions at this time. They are looking at cuts that are going to affect our ability to protect the communities from serious matters as it relates to criminal justice, to adequate public education. And we are not talking about extras. We are talking about basics, as Sheriff Mike Winter from southwestern Oregon has noted, and local school officials as well. We want to make it clear just what the consequences are going to be.

I mentioned Curry County on the Oregon coast, for example. A number of our other communities—Douglas County, Lane County, in particular—are going to see direct and painful consequences as a result of this program and the failure of this program to be reauthorized. County payments legislation is supported by a diverse coalition. We are pleased to see that this is a top priority of the National Association of Counties. A number of labor organizations have also said that they believe this is critically important.

I will just wrap it up by saying that I believe these cuts in payments to rural counties are going to hit the rural part of my State and rural America like a wrecking ball. They are going to pound these communities. And it doesn't have to happen. Senator SMITH has made that point. I have made that point. The whole Oregon congressional delegation, every member of our House delegation, we don't have 50 Members representing us in the House of Representatives like California, but we are going to be heard.

I have been gratified that Senator REID, our majority leader, has been willing to spend so much time with me. He is a westerner. He knows what the impact is in a public lands State. He was in our State. He saw what the forests mean to us. He is an honorable man and a man of his word. He said he would work with me to make sure that our State gets a fair shake. We are going to make sure that message is heard loudly and clearly when we have the hearing in the Forestry Subcommittee. We will make sure the legislation that the Senator from Montana has joined me on will get a thorough hearing at that particular discussion.

I thank the distinguished Presiding Officer for being a cosponsor of this bill. We are glad to have him in our bipartisan coalition.

I wanted to wrap up by saying I appreciate Senator SMITH's remarks here on the floor. He is going to hear from the Oregon congressional delegation and Oregon Senators again and again, until this critical program is reauthorized.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WARNER. Reserving the right to object, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to calling off the quorum?

Mr. WARNER. No. Before the Senator begins to speak, I want to make this clear. I ask the Presiding Officer, am I not to be recognized for the time between 3:45 and 4:30?

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, the distinguished Senator from Virginia, I think, will be pleased with my request.

I ask unanimous consent that Senator WARNER be recognized at this time for up to 60 minutes and, following that, Senator MURRAY be recognized for 15 minutes, a Republican Senator be recognized next for 10 minutes, then Senator MCCASKILL be recognized for 10 minutes, and then Senator SMITH be recognized for up to 75 minutes. I will be joining Senator SMITH during his 75 minutes. That is my request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Virginia is recognized.

IRAQ RESOLUTION

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I shall be joined by a number of colleagues and the purpose of our taking this time is as follows: We have decided to put in an amendment to H.J. Res. 20, amendment number 259 which will be printed in today's record. This amendment mirrors S. Con. Res. 7, a resolution prepared by myself and others sometime last week, which expresses certain concerns we have with regard to the President's plan as announced on January 10 of this year.

This amendment, to H.J. Res. 20 is cosponsored by Mr. LEVIN, Ms. COLLINS, BEN NELSON of Nebraska, Mr. HAGEL, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. SMITH, Mr. BIDEN, and as other Senators return to town, we may have further cosponsors.

We are concerned that the fighting rages on throughout Iraq, and particularly in Baghdad. It is very important

that the Senate should, as the greatest deliberative body—certainly in matters of war and peace—in a prompt way address the issues regarding Iraq.

Our men and women in the Armed Forces are fighting bravely in that conflict, as they are in conflicts elsewhere worldwide. Our concerns are heartfelt, not driven by political motivation. As we gathered as a group in the past 2 weeks to work on this, we took note of the fact that the President, on January 10, in his message to the Nation explicitly said that others could come forward with their ideas. I will paraphrase it—the exact quote is in the amendment we are putting in today—that he would take into consideration the views of others. So in a very constructive and a respectful way, our group said we disagreed with the President and we gave a series of points urging him to consider those points as he begins to implement such plan as finally devised throughout Iraq but most specifically in Baghdad.

We are very respectful of the fact that the plan put in by the President was in three parts: a diplomatic part, an economic part, and a military part. We explicitly stated in the resolution our support for the diplomatic and economic parts, and we are hopeful it can be put together in a timely fashion. There is some concern as to whether the three main parts can progress together, unified, in this operation, given the short timetable to implement it. So two parts of the program we wholeheartedly support and so state in this amendment.

The concern is about the military section. We state the explicit nature of our concerns. Some Senators have suggested the resolution expresses matters which I can find no source whatsoever in the resolution for those complaints. Nevertheless, I will address in the course of this time each and every one of those concerns.

Indeed, on the weekend talk shows, one Senator said: My problem with the Warner proposal and others that criticize the surge is, what is your plan? All right. That is a legitimate question. I say that our amendment states a clear strategy. It says as follows:

The Senate believes the United States should continue vigorous operations in Anbar Province specifically for the purpose of combating an insurgency including elements associated with the al-Qaida movement and denying terrorists a safe haven.

Secondly, the primary objective of the overall strategy in Iraq should be to encourage Iraqi leaders to make political compromises that will foster reconciliation and strengthen the unity government, ultimately leading to improvements in the security situation.

Next, the military part of the strategy should focus on maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq, denying international terrorists a safe haven, conducting counterterrorism operations, promoting regional stability, supporting the Iraqi efforts to bring

greater security to Baghdad, and training and equipping Iraqi forces to take full responsibility for their own security.

Likewise, another part of our amendment states:

The United States military operations should, as much as possible, be confined to these goals and should charge the Iraqi military with the primary mission of combating sectarian violence.

The United States Government should engage selected nations in the Middle East to develop a regional, internationally sponsored peace and reconciliation process. Overall, military, diplomatic, and economic strategies should not be regarded as an open-ended or unconditional commitment, but rather, as a new strategy, hereafter should be conditioned upon the Iraqi government meeting benchmarks that must be delivered in writing and agreed to by the Prime Minister.

Then we spell out a series of benchmarks. Such benchmarks should include, but not be limited to, the deployment of that number of additional Iraqi security forces as specified in the plan in Baghdad, ensuring equitable distribution of resources of the Government of Iraq without regard to the sect or ethnicity of recipients, enacting and implementing legislation to ensure that the oil resources of Iraq benefit Sunni Arabs, Shia Arabs, Kurds and other Iraqi citizens in an equitable manner, and the authority of the Iraqi commanders to make tactical and operational decisions without political intervention.

Further, some Senators have indicated, again incorrectly, that our resolution either fails to recognize, or disagrees with all aspects of the President's plan, namely the political and economic aspects, in addition to the military part of his plan.

In fact, our resolution acknowledges directly that the President's plan is multi-faceted. Our resolution states, whereas, on January 10, 2007, following consultations with the Iraqi Prime Minister, the President announced a new strategy, which consists of three basic elements: diplomatic, economic, and military.

As such, our resolution disagrees only with the military aspect of the President's plan, and actually supports the diplomatic and economic aspects of his plan.

Finally, some Senators have suggested that our resolution either fails to support the troops, or threatens a cut-off in funding. Actually, our resolution does neither. It states forcefully our support for the troops: whereas, over 137,000 American military personnel are currently serving in Iraq, like thousands of others since March 2003, with the bravery and professionalism consistent with the finest traditions of the United States Armed Forces, and are deserving of our support of all Americans, which they have strongly; whereas, many American service personnel have lost their lives, and many more have been wounded, in Iraq, and the American people will always honor their sacrifices and honor their families.

And our resolution, specifically protects funding for our troops in the field and states: the Congress should not take any action that will endanger United States military forces in the field, including the elimination or reduction of funds for troops in the field, as such an action with respect to funding would undermine their safety or harm their effectiveness in pursuing their assigned missions.

In sum, our resolution aims not to contravene the Constitutional authorities as Commander-in-Chief, but, rather, to accept the offer to Congress made by the President on January 10, 2007 that, "if members have improvements that can be made, we will make them. If circumstances change, we will adjust."

It is clear that the United States' strategy and operations in Iraq can only be sustained and achieved with support from the American people and with a level of bipartisanship in Congress.

The purpose of this resolution is not to cut our forces or to set a timetable for withdrawal, but, rather, to express the genuine concerns of a number of Senators from both parties about the President's plan.

It is not meant to be confrontational, but instead to provide a sense of bipartisanship resolve on our new strategy in Iraq. It follows many of the conclusions of the Baker-Hamilton report by focusing on what is truly in our national interest in Iraq, and spells those goals out in detail.

I want to divide our time between colleagues. I will ask at this time that the distinguished Senator from Nebraska, Mr. HAGEL, be recognized and that, following his comments, I shall be recognized again to give the remainder of my remarks. I say on a personal note to the Senator how much I valued our conversation over the weekend, together with our distinguished colleague from Maine, after which we decided today to put the language of S. Con. Res. 7 in as an amendment to the pending matter before the Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska is recognized.

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, I rise to join my colleagues, Senators WARNER, COLLINS, and others, in offering this amendment to the continuing resolution.

Last week, Senators COLLINS, SNOWE, SMITH, VOINOVICH, COLEMAN, and myself sent a letter to the Senate leadership urging our distinguished majority and minority leaders to reach an agreement so the Senate could debate the war in Iraq.

We said, and I quote from that letter:

The current stalemate is unacceptable to us and to the people of this country.

In the letter, we pledged to—again quoting the letter—"explore all of our options under the Senate procedures and practices to ensure a full and open debate on the Senate floor." That, of course, is why we are here today.

I, similar to my colleagues, am deeply disappointed that a full and open debate on Iraq remains stymied in the Senate. All Members—Members of both parties—have the right and responsibility to present their views and, if they choose, submit other resolutions regarding the war in Iraq.

I am also deeply disappointed that both sides have used procedural tactics in this process. My colleagues and I were assured that the leaders were committed to reaching an agreement on this debate. That has not yet happened, and I, similar to my colleagues, intend to do everything in my power as a Senator to ensure a full and open debate of the Iraq war on the Senate floor in front of the American people. We owe it to our soldiers and their families, and we owe it to the American people.

I wish to focus on one particular aspect of this debate and that has to do with the resolution itself—the relevancy and importance of Senate resolutions. In the last 15 years, there is ample, strong, and significant precedent in the Senate debating a President's military policies while troops are deployed overseas—Bosnia, Somalia, Haiti, Kosovo. In each of those situations, I and many of my colleagues here today in the Senate debated and most of us voted binding and non-binding resolutions regarding U.S. military operations abroad. Many of these measures expressed opposition to the military operations, criticizing, for example, one, the open-ended nature of the deployment; two, the danger of mission creep or escalation of military involvement; three, the danger of deploying U.S. forces into sectarian conflict; and four, the failure of the President to consult with Congress.

It might be instructive to review some of the Senate's history on these recent debates regarding these recent resolutions. Let me begin with Bosnia.

In June of 1992, U.S. forces began to deploy to Bosnia. In December 1995, the United States was preparing to deploy substantial ground forces into Bosnia, roughly 20,000 American ground force combat troops, very similar to the number we are now looking at in the President's escalation of more American troops into Iraq today.

As a result of President Clinton's decision in 1995, the Senate considered Senate Concurrent Resolution 35, a resolution submitted by our colleague from Texas, the senior Senator, Mrs. HUTCHISON. This resolution was a non-binding resolution. Again, this was a nonbinding resolution. This resolution said:

The Congress opposes President Clinton's decision to deploy United States military ground forces into the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina to implement the General Framework Agreement for peace in Bosnia. . . .

This resolution also said:

Congress strongly supports the United States military personnel who may be ordered by the President to implement the general framework for the peace in Bosnia.

So, therefore, it is saying we support our troops, but we disapprove of the President's policy to send more troops. This resolution also said it was a continuation of the previous debate on support of the troops already deployed.

As Senator HUTCHISON said on the Senate floor on December 13:

There are many of us who do not think that this is the right mission, but who are going to go full force to support our troops. In fact, we believe we are supporting our troops in the most effective way by opposing this mission because we think it is the wrong one. . . .

A month earlier in November 1995, Senator HUTCHISON framed the complexities of our military intervention in Bosnia in terms that are eerily relevant to today. She said:

I am very concerned that we are also setting a precedent for our troops to be deployed on the ground in border conflicts, in ethnic conflicts, in civil wars. . . .

Opposition to the President's policy but strong support for the U.S. military—this is similar to the debate we are having today on Iraq.

Senator HUTCHISON's resolution had 28 cosponsors, including our friends and colleagues, Senators INHOFE, CRAIG, KYL, LOTT, BENNETT, HATCH, SHELBY, and STEVENS.

On December 13, 1995, 47 Senators voted in favor of Senator HUTCHISON's nonbinding resolution. That day, 47 Senators believed you could oppose the President's policy but still support our troops.

The next day, December 14, 1995, the Senate considered Senate Joint Resolution 44, a binding resolution introduced by Senator Dole. This resolution supported U.S. troops in Bosnia. This resolution had six cosponsors, including our colleagues, Senators MCCAIN and LIEBERMAN.

On December 14, 1995, the Senate adopted this resolution by a vote of 69 to 30. That was Bosnia in 1995.

Somalia: In December 1992, U.S. troops began to deploy to Somalia. Nearly a year later, in September 1993, the Senate debated the objectives, the mission, and strategy of our military deployment in Somalia. Speaking on the Senate floor on September 23, 1993, Senator MCCAIN framed the debate when he said:

Somalia is a prime example of lofty ambitions gone awry. Our service men and women have become . . . part of a mission to build Somalia into a stable democracy—something, incidentally, it has never been, and shows no sign of ever becoming this decade.

The manner in which military force is to be used to further this grandiose objective has been left unclear. Without a clear military objective, our forces in Somalia have found themselves involved in a situation where they cannot distinguish between friend and foe. They have often been presented with situations where they cannot even distinguish between civilians and combatants.

On September 9, the Senate voted 90 to 7 to adopt a nonbinding—a nonbinding—sense-of-Congress resolution submitted by Senator BYRD. This resolution called on the President to out-

line the goals, objectives, and duration of the U.S. deployment in Somalia and said Congress believes the President "should seek and receive congressional authorization in order for the deployment of U.S. forces to Somalia to continue."

There are 11 cosponsors of the Byrd measure, including our colleagues, Senators MCCAIN, COCHRAN, BOND, and WARNER.

One month later, after the horrible death of 18 U.S. troops in early October, the Senate considered two binding measures to cut off funds, one introduced by Senator MCCAIN and one by Senator BYRD.

On October 15, 1993, the McCain measure, which would have terminated further U.S. military operations in Somalia, was tabled 61 to 38. That same day, the Senate voted 76 to 23 to adopt the Byrd measure to cut off all funding in March 1994 for U.S. forces in Somalia.

There are two more very clear examples, such as the examples I have given on Somalia and Bosnia, that I could discuss—Haiti and Kosovo—in some detail, and I may do that later. But the point is, the facts are clear. There is clear precedent—clear precedent—for both binding and nonbinding resolutions, as well as legislation to redirect, condition or cut off funds for military operations, and this is at the same time we have and we had military forces in those countries.

So to argue, to state, to imply this is somehow not only irrelevant but unprecedented is not the case. The Congress has always had a responsibility, not just constitutionally but morally, to inject itself in the great debate of war.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, will the Senator yield on that very point?

Mr. HAGEL. Yes, I yield to Senator WARNER.

Mr. WARNER. We had in our discussions, and Senator COLLINS joined in this discussion—that we could not conceive—and that I, this Senator from Virginia, could ever participate in a cutoff-of-funding in regards to this situation in Iraq.

But back to historical precedents. I have this volume, the "Encyclopedia of the United States Congress," compiled by 20 eminent historians in 1995. And on this subject that the Senator addressed, they said the following:

Another informal power of the Congress in the foreign policy field is the passage of resolutions by the House or the Senate, often called a sense-of-the-House or sense-of-the-Senate resolution. Although not legally enforceable, such resolutions are often taken seriously by the President and his foreign policy advisers because they are useful indicators of underlying public concern about important foreign policy questions. Moreover, as a general rule, the White House wants to maintain cooperative relations with the Congress and to give legislators the impression that their views have been heard and have been taken into account in policy formulation.

Clear documentation of the Senator's points in this very erudite resource of

the history of the Congress. I thank the Senator.

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Virginia.

In conclusion, I add that the American people have had enough of the misrepresentations, the politics, and the procedural intrigue in the Senate. I say again to our distinguished leaders of both our parties: It is your responsibility, as leaders of this body, to resolve this procedural dispute so that the Senate can have a full, fair, open debate on the war in Iraq. And I will continue to join my colleagues—Senators WARNER, COLLINS, SNOWE, and others—in making every effort to bring up our resolution at every available opportunity until that debate occurs.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DURBIN). The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, before the Senator leaves the floor, I have another point of history. I find this fascinating. I hope, hereafter, colleagues, pundits, and writers will at least recognize that, and I repeat it. Senate Historian documents confirm the Senate has been posing sense-of-the-Senate resolutions since 1789. Thus, our Framers of the Constitution and those who served in the early Congresses recognized the value of this type of resolution.

I yield the floor. I thank my distinguished colleague from Maine, again, for her steadfast support and advice throughout this entire process today, tomorrow, and well into the future.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine is recognized.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I am very pleased to join with the distinguished senior Senator from Virginia—a former chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, an individual who has devoted his life to the support of our military—in offering, along with a number of our colleagues, this very important resolution as an amendment to the continuing resolution. There are many differing views in this body on the road ahead in Iraq, and those views are legitimate but they deserve to be debated. There is no more pressing issue facing this country than Iraq. The public is disappointed to see the Senate avoid the debate on the most important issue of our day. The current stalemate is unacceptable. It is unacceptable to the American people. Regardless of our views on the appropriate strategy for Iraq, we have an obligation, we have a duty as Senators to fully debate this issue and to go on record on what we believe to be the appropriate strategy, the road ahead in Iraq.

I am very disappointed that the procedural wrangling on both sides of the aisle prevented that kind of full and fair debate last week. I believed strongly that we should go ahead with that debate, and I am sorry that did not occur. I hope our leaders on both sides of the aisle will work together to come up with a fair approach to debate this most important issue.

Just this last weekend, the State of Maine lost another soldier in combat in Iraq. The American people deserve to know where each and every one of us stands on the President's strategy, on whether to cut off funding, on the important issues related to this very pressing issue. There are legitimate arguments on both sides. There are those who agree with my position that a surge of 21,500 troops would be a mistake. There are those who believe that the surge is the right course to follow. I respect the views of Senators on both sides of the aisle and, indeed, this is not a partisan issue. But surely—surely this is an issue that deserves our full debate in the best traditions of this historic body. Surely—surely our constituents deserve to know where we stand.

I think this is so important that nothing should prevent us from going to this debate prior to our recessing. I think we should make this so important that if it is not done, perhaps we should reconsider our plans for next week. I think we should proceed with this most important debate without further delay. There are a number of worthwhile resolutions that have been brought forward. Let the debate begin.

Finally, I want to add just a couple of comments to those made by the distinguished Senator from Virginia and the distinguished Senator from Nebraska, and that is about the importance of these resolutions. They are by no means unprecedented, as both of my colleagues have so articulately pointed out. They offer guidance to the administration. It remains my hope that if the Senate passes the resolution that I have helped to coauthor that the President will accept our invitation to take a second look at his plan. We urge him to explore all alternatives and to work with us on a bipartisan strategy to chart a new road ahead in Iraq.

As a result of my trip to Iraq in December, I concluded that we face a number of different challenges in Iraq and the strategy depends on where you are in Iraq. In Baghdad, the capital is engulfed in sectarian violence. Yes, Baghdad is in the midst of a civil war between the Shiites and the Sunnis. To insert more American soldiers in the midst of this sectarian struggle would, in my judgment, be a major mistake. Only the Iraqis can devise a solution to the sectarian strife that is gripping Baghdad, and I think if the Iraqis had taken the long overdue political steps, if they more fully integrated the Sunni minority into the power structures, if they had passed an oil revenue bill that more equitably distributed oil revenues, if they had held the long overdue provincial elections, we would not be in the crisis in which we are today.

Indeed, that is not just my opinion, that was the opinion of General Petraeus when I asked him that question during his nomination hearing before the Armed Services Committee.

By contrast to the sectarian strife that is plaguing Baghdad, the battle is

very different in Anbar Province to the west. There the fight is with al-Qaida and with foreign jihadists, and there and only there did I hear an American commander ask for more troops—only in Anbar Province—and he did so in order to capitalize on a recent positive development in which some of the local Sunni tribal leaders are now backing the coalition forces against al-Qaida.

My conclusion is that we do need more troops in Anbar, but we should reallocate from troops already in the country. I personally would choose to take troops out of Baghdad and send them west, to Anbar Province, and put the Iraqis in charge, fully in charge of security in Baghdad. I fear that by inserting thousands of additional troops into the midst of the sectarian strife in Baghdad, ironically we will ease the pressure on the Iraqi leaders to take the long-overdue steps to quell the sectarian violence, for I am convinced that the sectarian violence in Baghdad requires a political, not a military, solution.

In Basra, the third stop on our trip, I heard a British commander, a British colonel, give an excellent presentation to us. He said that initially the British and American troops were welcomed in Iraq, but as time has gone on, what he called the consent line has declined and their presence has been less and less tolerated and more and more resented.

I think perhaps the only issue on which all Members of this body can agree is that our troops have served nobly and well in Iraq, and that we need a new strategy. We disagree on the road ahead, but that is what democracy and the traditions of the Senate are all about. We should not be afraid of this debate. We should debate this issue fully and openly and let our constituents and the administration know exactly where the Senate stands.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I thank our colleague. I wonder if I could ask our colleague a question before she departs? She made reference to her trip and the discussions that she had with the senior commanders. I would like to bring to her attention testimony that came before our committee, of which the distinguished Senator from Maine is a member, at which time we heard from the Commander of the United States Central Command, General Abizaid.

In the course of his testimony to Congress on November 15, 2006—right in the timeframe the Senator made her trip—I will quote him, General Abizaid. The general said:

I met with every divisional commander, General Casey, Corps Commander, and General Dempsey—we all talked together. And I said, "In your professional opinion, if we were to bring in more American troops now, does it add considerably to our ability to achieve success in Iraq?" And they all said no. And the reason is because we want the Iraqis to do more. It's easy for the Iraqis to rely upon us to do this work. I believe that

more American forces prevent the Iraqis from doing more, from taking more responsibility for their own future.

I say to my colleague, that quote captured my own visit, which was just barely a month before that, when I came back and I described in my public comments that the situation in Iraq was drifting sideways.

That was a very serious summary. But I said it because I felt obligated to our troops who were fighting bravely and courageously and with a level of professionalism that equals the finest hour in the 200-plus-year history of our military—and the support their families give them. I felt ever so strongly that we were obligated as a country to reexamine our strategy and I called for that reexamination of strategy and it has been done.

But I say to my colleague, General Abizaid's summary about the need for more forces, does that not summarize what you learned on your trip?

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, if I may respond to the Senator from Virginia, I remember very well General Abizaid's testimony before the Armed Services Committee in mid-November. And as the Senator has pointed out—and he presided over that hearing—it could not have been clearer General Abizaid said that he consulted with all the American commanders and that the effect of bringing in more American troops would be to relieve the pressure on the Iraqis to step up and take control of the security themselves.

Indeed, and ironically, General Petraeus, the new commander in Iraq, had written an article for the *Military Review* in January of 2006 in which he said that one of the lessons from his tours of duty in Iraq was that you should not do too much, that you should call upon the Iraqis to take responsibility for themselves. Indeed, my experience was just as the Senator's was. About a month after General Abizaid's testimony, I was in Iraq. I talked with the commanders on the ground, and I would like to share with the senior Senator what one American commander told me.

He said that a jobs program for Iraqis would do more good to quell the sectarian violence than the addition of more American troops. He told me that some Iraqi men are so desperate for money because they have been unemployed for so long that they are joining the Shiite militias. They are planting roadside bombs simply for the money because they are desperate.

I thought that was such a telling comment, I say to my distinguished colleague, because this was from a very experienced commander who had been in Iraq for a long time. At that moment he was not calling for more troops. None of the American commanders with whom I talked in Baghdad called for more troops. The only place where we heard a request for more troops was in Anbar Province, and as I have explained, the situation

in Anbar is totally different. It is not sectarian violence. The violence is with al-Qaida, the foreign jihadists, mainly Sunni versus Sunni, and it requires a different strategy.

So my experience, when added to the distinguished Senator's, shows a consistent pattern. Whether it was the distinguished Senator's trip in October or the testimony of General Abizaid in November or my journey in December, we heard exactly the same themes, exactly the same answers to the questions of whether we needed more troops.

Finally, let me say I went to Iraq with a completely open mind on this issue, and I came back convinced that sending more troops to Baghdad would be a colossal error.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I thank our colleague. I wonder if at this point in the colloquy—and then I will yield the floor because I know other Senators are anxious to speak—but we, the United States, the military, and the taxpayers have trained and equipped over 300,000 Iraqi security forces composed of the professional Army, police, border security, and a group of others. The thrust of our resolution originally, and this one that is here, the amendment which is identical, was to give the Iraqis this opportunity, which the Prime Minister himself called for. He said: Give us the opportunity to show that we can do this operation.

That is the basis on which we drew up the resolution. And in our resolution we said two things: The responsibility for Iraq's internal security and halting sectarian violence must rest primarily with the Government of Iraq and Iraqi security forces. Then, specifically we said in the conclusion: The United States military operations should, as much as possible, be confined to the goals that are enumerated in the previous paragraph and should charge—I repeat—charge the Iraqi military with the primary mission of combating sectarian violence, and that is in the Baghdad operation.

So I think those facts, our resolution, now referred to as an amendment, absolutely parallels what we learned firsthand on our trips into that region.

Mr. President, I see other Senators are waiting. I see the distinguished senior Senator from Maine, Ms. SNOWE.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine is recognized.

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, first, I want to commend the senior Senator from Virginia, Senator WARNER, for his unparalleled leadership, because it is borne of a tremendous credibility based on his military and professional experience on these vital issues, and that precise credibility lends the kind of expertise to the Senate, to the Congress, and to our Nation that is so vital at this point in time. But I think in the final analysis, it is something we have to honor as we consider the most consequential issue of our time.

I am very pleased the Senator has offered an amendment that reflects his

resolution that was modified and that was supported by both sides of the political aisle. I am pleased to join my colleague from Nebraska, Senator HAGEL, and my colleague from Maine, Senator COLLINS, because this is a critical issue. It is one of the issues that is the most significant of our time.

As we begin this week, it is regrettable we don't have the Iraq debate before the floor of the Senate in the form of considering a resolution. Tomorrow, the House of Representatives is going to proceed. They are going to proceed to debate a resolution in opposition to the troop surge proposed by the President of the United States. They will have that debate this week. The question is when and if the Senate is going to have that debate on a specific resolution, on specific issues, with specific votes.

Unfortunately, what we are witnessing today is the shrinking role of the Senate when it comes to the war in Iraq, a war that has been ongoing for 4 years. I am dismayed because I don't see any evidence. I don't see any evidence of working on a bipartisan basis to coalesce around an issue and on a position where it has been demonstrated there is a majority of support in the Senate to have negotiations, to have consultation, to work it out. I don't see any evidence of that. Have we come to the point in the Senate where we haven't been able to determine procedurally how to move forward on a nonbinding resolution? It is hard to believe the Senate would be marginalized on that point.

Now I am speaking from experience. This is my 13th year in the Senate—my 13th year. I served in the House of Representatives for 16 years. I served for more than 20 years—I think about 24 years—on Foreign Affairs, Foreign Relations, Armed Services, and currently the Intelligence Committee. So I speak from experience. You have to work across the political aisle. And there wasn't a time when we didn't discuss these issues: Lebanon, Persian Gulf, Panama before the Persian Gulf. We had Bosnia and Kosovo. We were able to work it out. The fact is I well recall a statement I had drafted back in 2000 illustrating examples of bipartisanship here on the floor of the Senate, one of which I said about the Senator from Virginia, Senator WARNER, in working across the aisle with the Senator from West Virginia, Mr. BYRD, on the issue of Kosovo.

That has been the hallmark of the Senate. Does it mean that we disagree on a major issue of our time? No. There are differences of opinion, but what is the Senate afraid of? What are we afraid of? To debate and to vote on various positions, whether it is on our position on the troop surge, whether it is on the position of cutting out funding, the troop gaps, a new authorization? Some of those issues and positions I would disagree with. But does that mean to say the Senate cannot withstand the conflicting views of various

Members of the Senate? It is not unheard of, that both sides of the political aisle will have differing views.

I came to this debate a few weeks ago when we were getting prepared ostensibly to work on this issue, to debate, which is consistent with the traditions and principles of this institution, which has been its hallmark. That is why it has been considered the greatest deliberative body in the world. Unfortunately, it is not living up to that expectation or characterization, regrettably. But I joined with the Senator from Nebraska in his effort across the aisle with the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee because I wanted to send a message that here and now, there will be those of us on this side of the aisle who disagree with the President on the troop surge. So I wanted to send that message. I read the resolution. I know there are some on this side of the aisle who didn't accept that language. But I thought it was important to do that. I cosponsored that resolution.

We had many meetings, as the Senator from Nebraska would note, with Chairman BIDEN and Chairman LEVIN, to work through this issue: how we could work with the Senator from Virginia, because we knew we had a majority on both sides of the aisle that could work it out, who were opposed to the troop surge. So how is it we couldn't get from here to there? And we met in good faith to negotiate, working out even the procedures. We agreed: Let's have an open, unfettered, unrestricted debate, which is consistent with this institution that is predicated on our Founding Fathers' vision of an institution based on accommodation and consensus. You have to get 60 votes. So we said: Let's work it out, and the good Senator from Virginia worked it out. He incorporated our concerns in his modified resolution so we could enjoin our efforts.

Now, it is not surprising on this side of the aisle that there are strong views that support the President, that don't believe we should have a vote. But does that mean to say we can't move forward and the House of Representatives can? So the House of Representatives is going to be debating this issue this week, and the Senate is going to be dithering. While our troops are on the front lines, the Senate is sitting on the sidelines.

I am amazed we have reached this point in the Senate. We should be embracing this moment. We are the voice of the American people. Constitutional democracy is predicated on majority rule, but a respect for minority rights. I don't see any ongoing negotiations and discussions. Maybe I missed something. I don't see that happening across the political aisle. If historically we took the position: You missed your chance, that you missed your chance with a vote—2 weeks ago—you mean that is it in the Senate? How did we pass major pieces of legislation, major

initiatives without saying: That is it; there is no room for discussion, there is no room for negotiation, there is no room for compromise.

Oftentimes I am challenged on this side because I work so much across the political aisle. Senator HAGEL did the same thing, as did Senator WARNER. We worked across the political aisle to make it work. But I do not see that mutual trust to say: Let's see how we can move forward on the most profound issue of our time. It is unimaginable that we cannot develop a strategy for deliberating on this most consequential issue.

We are expecting to adjourn next week for a recess. I thought to myself: Why? Why, so we will get back to Iraq before we know it? That is what we have heard: Just wait. The troop surge isn't going to wait. The Iraqi war doesn't take a recess. Our men and women aren't taking a recess. Why can't we debate now and vote on these issues? Are we saying we are simply not capable of talking?

That is what the Senate is all about. It is based on consensus. It is based on compromise. It is based on conciliation. It is based on the fact that you have to develop cooperation in order to get anything done. It is not unusual. If historically we took the position: You missed your chance because there are disparate views, so that there would be no opportunity to further discuss or negotiate—we missed our chance? Are we talking about scoring political points? Are we talking about what is the best policy for this country with respect to Iraq at a time when men and women are on the front lines; at a time when the President is proposing a troop surge which I and others joined with Senator WARNER because we oppose that; at a time in which we are almost a year to the anniversary of the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra?

In fact, Senator WARNER and I paid a visit just days after that, the first congressional delegation, and we saw all the manifestations of what exists today in the most pronounced way. And we are saying we can't get it done in the Senate. Is this about scoring political points? I read every day: Who is winning politically? Because that is what it is about. It is about winning politically on a policy with respect to Iraq where we have been mired for 4 years with a strategy that hasn't been working. And we are saying, who is winning politically? Isn't it about Iraq? Isn't it about our men and women? Isn't it about what is in the best interests for this country?

We have given so much. Our men and women have sacrificed immeasurably. As Senator COLLINS indicated, we lost another from Maine this weekend, SGT Eric Ross, 26. These men and women have put themselves on the frontlines. Yet we sit and hesitate to talk about what is in their best interests. Some say it is a nonbinding resolution that has no impact. I daresay, if it doesn't

have any impact, then why is it we are not voting? What has a greater resonance in America? Is it silence or is it taking action on the most consequential issue of our time? I can only imagine, if we had an overwhelming bipartisan vote on Senator WARNER's resolution—that is bipartisan, I might add—because those Members strove to make it bipartisan in the Senate, many strive to do that, so we can send a message that would be profound, that would resonate. To have a strong vote in the Senate or silence, which would have greater resonance? I think we know the answer to this question.

I am concerned we are taking a political U-turn away from the message in the last election. I was in that last election. I heard loudly and clearly. I don't blame the people of Maine or across this country for their deep-seated frustration. They are right. There was too much partisanship and too much polarization.

What we need now is leadership. We need leadership for this country. They are thirsting for a strong leadership, an honorable leadership that leads us to a common goal. No one expected unanimity in the Senate but we would give integrity to this process to allow it to work and not cynically say who is winning and who is losing today politically, so we have 30-second ads that will be run by outside groups or we are seeing them now. We are not shedding the political past. We have made a political U-turn. We are returning to it.

This isn't about party labels. This isn't whether it is good for Republicans or good for Democrats. It is what is good for America. It is not about red States and blue States. It is about the red, white, and blue.

I am dismayed we are the second month into a new Congress, after the American people resoundingly repudiated the politics of the past, the partisanship and polarization, creating a poisonous environment. They repudiated all of that. Here we are, back to the same old approach. Instead of giving confidence to the American people that we will speak, we are their voice, we give voice to their fears and to their hopes, to their concerns that they rightfully have because we are not making the kind of progress, we are moving in a different direction on Iraq that obviously has been exemplified by the continuing and ongoing sectarian warfare.

Fifteen months ago when Senator WARNER came to the Senate and offered a resolution, 2006 was going to be the year of transition to Iraqi sovereignty. It was 2006 when we would turn over all the security to the Iraqi security forces. But 2006 has come and gone. We haven't made any measurable progress.

As I said, when I was there a year ago, we saw the manifestations of the sectarian warfare, a vacuum had been created politically because no new central government had been created. That took months. We allowed that

vacuum to continue. We got a new government. Yet they have been hesitant—indeed, they have been an impediment—to quelling the sectarian violence and confronting and demobilizing the militias.

I heard a year ago about the graft and corruption that was running rampant in the ministries, as we saw recently with the Deputy Minister of Health funneling money to support the sectarian violence and the militias. We have seen and we have known all of that.

So Senator WARNER got that resolution passed. We united around him. In June of 2006, we passed a resolution as well that called for a regional conference so we would begin the diplomatic offensive the Iraq Study Group spoke to. But that has been ignored as well. I know the administration has had a number of strategies in Iraq. They had the national strategy for victory that was also 15 months old, that represented all the issues Senator WARNER has embraced in his resolution, to which they only paid lip service, regrettably.

So we are here today. We want to give voice to the concerns of the American people who want us to move in a different direction, not to commit additional troops at a time in which we have a government in Iraq that hasn't demonstrated a measurable commitment to controlling the sectarian violence and make the political changes within its Government that demonstrate a good-faith effort—whether it is the oil revenue-sharing distribution money, the provincial elections and, as I said, the demobilization of the militias; in fact, impeding our efforts to capture people who were responsible for some of the genocide and the warfare. But here we are.

I hope we can find a way. What could be of higher priority than to be able to debate and to vote on our respective positions, to give a vote on the Warner resolution that is so important that a majority of Senators support? I know we can build the threshold for the 60. It is imperative we do it. It is inexcusable, frankly, that on the process for debating, we cannot reach an agreement. We are failing the American people on a colossal scale. We are held up by arcane procedural measures that could be worked out, if only we reached across the political aisle.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I thank our distinguished colleague from Maine.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's 60 minutes has been expired.

Mr. WARNER. I ask for 2 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WARNER. I thank the Senator from Maine. The Senator mentioned the bipartisan spirit. I am very pleased to state that Senator LEVIN, whom I spoke with this afternoon, Senator BEN NELSON, who has been with us steadily on this, and Senator BIDEN allowed with very extensive enthusiasm to

have their names attached as cosponsors.

I thank my colleagues who have come over and participated in this debate and others who have listened. I thank the distinguished Senator, my good friend from Nebraska, for working so hard on this amendment. We will fight on.

We may be idealists, but we will fight on for what we believe in and the integrity of this institution because we firmly believe, to the extent we can, forging a bipartisan consensus is the extent to which we can hopefully regain the full confidence of the American people on what we are doing in Iraq.

I agree with the President, we should not let it slip into a chaotic situation, but we do have some different constructive thoughts as to our strategy ahead.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

CONTINUING RESOLUTION

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the Senate to talk about my strong support of the House Joint Resolution 20 that is the joint funding resolution for the current fiscal year we are considering this week.

I am very concerned because we are fast approaching the wire on getting this important resolution passed. If we don't pass this bipartisan bill, the safety of American citizens could be put in danger. If this bill is not passed this week, our air traffic controllers will be furloughed. Our air safety inspectors will be furloughed. If we don't pass this bipartisan bill in the next several days, we are going to see a decline in our ability to provide railroad inspections, pipeline safety inspections, and truck safety inspections.

As chair of the Subcommittee on Transportation and Housing on Appropriations, I am very concerned. I am here to talk about some of the consequences if we don't get our work done on the CR this week. We are going to be feeling the consequences in the area of housing. If we don't pass this bill, hundreds of thousands of Americans are going to face a housing crisis.

Mr. President, 157,000 low-income people could lose their housing if we don't get this bill passed in the next several days; 70,000 could lose their housing vouchers; 11,500 units that are housing the homeless could be lost. Those are some of the consequences Americans will face under my jurisdiction if this Congress fails to pass the joint funding resolution in the next few days.

But don't take my word for it. Last Thursday, I held a hearing with President Bush's very able Secretary of Transportation, Mary Peters. Secretary Peters is not a newcomer to transportation. She has spent her entire career working to ensure safety and execute infrastructure projects,

largely in her home State of Arizona, but she also served as the Federal Highway Administrator.

Secretary Peters told us last week, in very clear terms, how safety would be affected if we failed to pass this joint funding resolution. I share her exact words from a few days ago. Secretary Peters told the Senate:

[I]f we were funded at the '06 levels . . . it would have drastic consequences, not only at the FAA, but as you mentioned with our other safety programs, such as our rail safety programs, our truck inspection programs and of course the air traffic controllers and inspectors at maintenance facilities for the aviation community.

The Bush administration's Transportation Secretary is warning of drastic consequences if we fail to pass this continuing resolution. I am here tonight to talk about some of those consequences. I asked Secretary Peters what it would mean for safety and what it would mean for hiring if Congress doesn't pass this joint funding resolution. President Bush's Secretary of Transportation said:

[W]e will see a serious decline in the number of safety inspectors: Truck safety inspectors, rail safety inspectors, aviation inspectors across the broad range in our program.

That is directly from the President's Transportation Secretary.

I don't think any Senator wants to be responsible for voting for a serious decline in the number of truck safety inspectors, rail safety inspectors or aviation space. I don't think Members want to explain to our constituents we voted to undermine their safety as they travel by car, train or plane. Let me be clear: No one can say Members didn't know how your vote would hurt a State because we have very clear warnings from the Transportation Secretary herself.

The first reason we need to pass this joint funding resolution is to keep our critical safety inspectors on the job, protecting the American people, as they are doing today. We also need to pass a joint funding resolution because, without it, States will not be able to address their most pressing highway, bridge, and road problems. In fact, Secretary Peters also warned us that some States could miss an entire construction season if Congress does not enact this bill.

She said that State transportation commissioners need to know how money will be available to them this year. So she said to us last week at the hearing:

It is especially important to those states who have a construction season that will be upon us very, very shortly and if they are not able to know that this funding is coming and be able to let contracts, accordingly, we could easily miss an entire construction season.

That is what this joint funding resolution is about. Let me be very clear. Your constituents, my constituents, all of our constituents will feel the impact of our vote on roads that are not fixed or roads that remain clogged or congested or unsafe.

Those are a few of the safety consequences if we fail to pass the bipartisan joint funding resolution in the next several days. The failure to pass H.J. Res. 20 will also have a painful impact on housing for hundreds of thousands of Americans. In this bipartisan bill, we worked very hard to make sure vulnerable families would not be thrown on the streets or face out-of-reach rent increases.

We provided some critical support for section 8, homeless assistance grants, housing equity conversion loans, HOPE VI, and the Public Housing Operating Fund.

For Section 8 project-based assistance, this spending resolution we will be considering this week provides an increase of \$939 million over last year's fiscal year 2006 level. It provides \$300 million over the President's 2007 budget request. This is essential, I want my colleagues to know, to preserve affordable housing for 157,000 low-income households. Without this increase, without us acting in the next several days, many of these low-income residents are going to become homeless or be displaced or face unaffordable rent increases.

For section 8 tenant-based assistance, this spending resolution provides an increase of \$502 million, equal to the President's 2007 budget request, to continue to renew expiring vouchers. Without this increase, without us acting in the next several days, more than 70,000 housing vouchers are going to be lost. That means residents may become homeless or displaced or forced into overcrowded housing.

For homeless assistance grants, this funding resolution we are considering provides an increase of \$115 million to meet expiring contracts for homeless individuals and their families. Without this increase, without us acting in the next several days, as many as 11,500 units will not be renewed—not be renewed—forcing these homeless individuals and families back onto the street.

The joint resolution also helps thousands of seniors to stay in their homes because it supports the housing equity conversion loans. Currently, 90 percent of all reverse mortgages for the elderly fall under this guarantee program. Without this language, this popular program will shut down, and it will hurt the ability of thousands of elderly individuals and couples to remain in their homes and pay for critical living expenses.

The joint resolution we are considering this week also extends the authorization for the HOPE VI Program, which is helping us across the country knock down the most deteriorated public housing units and replace them with new, safe housing units for families. If this funding resolution is not adopted this week, not a single dollar will go out for this popular program for the rest of this year.

Finally, this resolution will help housing authorities meet their soaring expenses. This resolution supports the